Social Conflict and the Theory of Social Change

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THIS paper attempts to examine some of the functions of social conflict in the process of social change. I shall first deal with some functions of conflict *within* social systems, more specifically with its relation to institutional rigidities, technical progress and productivity, and will then concern ourselves with the relation between social conflict and the changes *of* social systems.

A central observation of George Sorel in his *Reflections on Violence* which has not as yet been accorded sufficient attention by sociologists may serve us as a convenient springboard. Sorel wrote:

> We are today faced with a new and unforeseen fact—a middle class which seeks to weaken its own strength. The race of bold captains who made the greatness of modern industry disappears to make way for an ultracivilized aristocracy which asks to be allowed to live in peace.
>
> The threatening decadence may be avoided if the proletariat hold on with obstinacy to revolutionary ideas. *The antagonistic classes influence each other in a partly indirect but decisive manner*. Everything may be saved if the proletariat, by their use of violence, restore to the middle class something of its former energy.[1]

Sorel's specific doctrine of class struggle is not of immediate concern here. What is important for us is the idea that conflict (which Sorel calls violence, using the word in a very special sense) prevents the ossification of the social system by exerting pressure for innovation and creativity. Though Sorel's call to action was addressed to the working class and its interests, he conceived it to be of general importance for the total social system; to his mind the gradual disappearance of class conflict might well lead to the decadence of European culture. A social system, he felt, was in need of conflict if only to renew its energies and revitalize its creative forces.

This conception seems to be more generally applicable than to class struggle alone. Conflict within and between groups in a society can prevent accommodations and habitual relations from progressively impoverishing creativity. The clash of values and interests, the tension between what is and what some groups feel ought to be, the conflict

between vested interests and new strata and groups demanding their share of power, wealth and status, have been productive of vitality; note for example the contrast between the 'frozen world' of the Middle Ages and the burst of creativity that accompanied the thaw that set in with Renaissance civilization.

This is, in effect, the application of John Dewey's theory of consciousness and thought as arising in the wake of obstacles to the interaction of groups. 'Conflict is the gadfly of thought. It stirs us to observation and memory. It instigates to invention. It shocks us out of sheeplike passivity, and sets us at noting and contriving. . . . Conflict is a *sine qua non* of reflection and ingenuity.'[2]

Conflict not only generates new norms, new institutions, as I have pointed out elsewhere,[3] it may be said to be stimulating directly in the economic and technological realm. Economic historians often have pointed out that much technological improvement has resulted from the conflict activity of trade unions through the raising of wage levels. A rise in wages usually has led to a substitution of capital investment for labour and hence to an increase in the volume of investment. Thus the extreme mechanization of coal-mining in the United States has been partly explained by the existence of militant unionism in the American coalfields.[4] A recent investigation by Sidney C. Sufrin[5] points to the effects of union pressure, 'goading management into technical improvement and increased capital investment'. Very much the same point was made recently by the conservative British *Economist* which reproached British unions for their 'moderation' which it declared in part responsible for the stagnation and low productivity of British capitalism; it compared their policy unfavourably with the more aggressive policies of American unions whose constant pressure for higher wages has kept the American economy dynamic.[6]

This point raises the question of the adequacy and relevancy of the 'human relations' approach in industrial research and management practice. The 'human relations' approach stresses the 'collective purpose of the total organization' of the factory, and either denies or attempts to reduce conflicts of interests in industry.[7] But a successful reduction of industrial conflict may have unanticipated dysfunctional consequences for it may destroy an important stimulus for technological innovation.

It often has been observed that the effects of technological change have weighed most heavily upon the worker.[8] Both informal and formal organization of workers represent in part an attempt to mitigate the insecurities attendant upon the impact of unpredictable introduction of change in the factory.[9] But by organizing in unions workers gain a feeling of security through the effective conduct of institutionalized conflict with management and thus exert pressure on management to increase their returns by the invention of further cost-reducing devices. The search for mutual adjustment, understanding and 'unity' between

groups who find themselves in different life situations and have different life chances calls forth the danger that Sorel warns of, namely that the further development of technology would be seriously impaired.

The emergence of invention and of technological change in modern Western society, with its institutionalization of science as an instrument for making and remaking the world, was made possible with the gradual emergence of a pluralistic and hence conflict-charged structure of human relations. In the unitary order of the medieval guild system, 'no one was permitted to harm others by methods which enabled him to produce more quickly and more cheaply than they. Technical progress took on the appearance of disloyalty. The ideal was stable conditions in a stable industry.'[10]

In the modern Western world, just as in the medieval world, vested interests exert pressure for the maintenance of established routines; yet the modern Western institutional structure allows room for freedom of conflict. The structure no longer being unitary, vested interests find it difficult to resist the continuous stream of change-producing inventions. Invention, as well as its application and utilization, is furthered through the ever-renewed challenge to vested interests, as well as by the conflicts between the vested interests themselves.[11]

Once old forms of traditional and unitary integration broke down, the clash of conflicting interests and values, now no longer constrained by the rigidity of the medieval structure, pressed for new forms of unification and integration. Thus deliberate control and rationalized regulation of 'spontaneous' processes was required in military and political, as well as in economic institutions. Bureaucratic forms of organization with their emphasis on calculable, methodical and disciplined behaviour[12] arose at roughly the same period in which the unitary medieval structure broke down. But with the rise of bureaucratic types of organization peculiar new resistances to change made their appearance. The need for reliance on predictability exercises pressure towards the rejection of innovation which is perceived as interference with routine. Conflicts involving a 'trial through battle' are unpredictable in their outcome, and therefore unwelcome to the bureaucracy which must strive towards an ever-widening extension of the area of predictability and calculability of results. But social arrangements which have become habitual and totally patterned are subject to the blight of ritualism. If attention is focused exclusively on the habitual clues, 'people may be unfitted by being fit in an unfit fitness',[13] so that their habitual training becomes an incapacity to adjust to new conditions. To quote Dewey again: 'The customary is taken for granted; it operates subconsciously. Breach of wont and use is focal; it forms "consciousness".'[14] A group or a system which no longer is challenged is no longer capable of a creative response. It may subsist, wedded to the eternal yesterday of precedent and tradition, but it is no longer capable of renewal.[15]

'Only a hitch in the working of habit occasions emotion and pro-
vokes thought.'[16] Conflict within and between bureaucratic structures
provides means for avoiding the ossification and ritualism which
threatens their form of organization.[17] Conflict, though apparently
dysfunctional for highly rationalized systems, may actually have im-
portant latent functional consequences. By attacking and overcoming
the resistance to innovation and change that seems to be an 'occupa-
tional psychosis' always threatening the bureaucratic office holder, it
can help to insure that the system do not stifle in the deadening routine
of habituation and that in the planning activity itself creativity and
invention can be applied.

We have so far discussed change within systems, but changes of
systems are of perhaps even more crucial importance for sociological
inquiry. Here the sociology of Karl Marx serves us well. Writes Marx
in a polemic against Proudhon:

> Feudal production also had two antagonistic elements, which were equally
> designated by the names of *good side* and *bad side* of feudalism, without regard
> being had to the fact that it is always the evil side which finishes by over-
> coming the good side. It is the bad side that produces the movement which
> makes history, by constituting the struggle. If at the epoch of the reign
> of feudalism the economists, enthusiastic over the virtues of chivalry, the
> delightful harmony between rights and duties, the patriarchal life of the
> towns, the prosperous state of domestic industry in the country, of the
> development of industry organized in corporations, guilds and fellowships, in
> fine of all which constitutes the beautiful side of feudalism, had proposed to
> themselves the problem of eliminating all which cast a shadow upon this
> lovely picture—serfdom, privilege, anarchy—what would have been the
> result? All the elements which constituted the struggle would have been
> annihilated, and the development of the bourgeoisie would have been
> stifled in the germ. They would have set themselves the absurd problem of
> eliminating history.[18]

According to Marx, conflict leads not only to ever-changing relations
within the existing social structure, but the total social system under-
goes transformation through conflict.

During the feudal period, the relations between serf and lord (be-
tween burgher and gentry, underwent many changes both in law and
in fact. Yet conflict finally led to a breakdown of all feudal relations
and hence to the rise of a new social system governed by different
patterns of social relations.

It is Marx's contention that the negative element, the opposition,
conditions the change when conflict between the sub-groups of a system
becomes so sharpened that at a certain point this system breaks down.
Each social system contains elements of strain and of potential conflict;
if in the analysis of the social structure of a system these elements are
ignored, if the adjustment of patterned relations is the only focus of

attention, then it is not possible to anticipate basic social change. Exclusive attention to wont and use, to the customary and habitual bars access to an understanding of possible latent elements of strain which under certain conditions eventuate in overt conflict and possibly in a basic change of the social structure. This attention should be focused, in Marx's view, on what evades and resists the patterned normative structure and on the elements pointing to new and alternative patterns emerging from the existing structure. What is diagnosed as disease from the point of view of the institutionalized pattern may, in fact, says Marx, be the first birth pang of a new one to come; not wont and use but the break of wont and use is focal. The 'matters-of-fact' of a 'given state of affairs' when viewed in the light of Marx's approach, become limited, transitory; they are regarded as containing the germs of a process that leads beyond them.[19]

Yet, not all social systems contain the same degree of conflict and strain. The sources and incidence of conflicting behaviour in each particular system vary according to the type of structure, the patterns of social mobility, of ascribing and achieving status and of allocating scarce power and wealth, as well as the degree to which a specific form of distribution of power, resources and status is accepted by the component actors within the different sub-systems. But if, within any social structure, there exists an excess of claimants over opportunities for adequate reward, there arises strain and conflict.

The distinction between changes *of* systems and changes *within* systems is, of course, a relative one. There is always some sort of continuity between a past and a present, or a present and a future social system; societies do not die the way biological organisms do, for it is difficult to assign precise points of birth or death to societies as we do with biological organisms. One may claim that all that can be observed is a change of the organization of social relations; but from one perspective such change may be considered re-establishment of equilibrium while from another it may be seen as the formation of a new system.

A natural scientist, describing the function of earthquakes, recently stated admirably what could be considered the function of conflict. 'There is nothing abnormal about an earthquake. An unshakeable earth would be a dead earth. A quake is the earth's way of maintaining its equilibrium, a form of adjustment that enables the crust to yield to stresses that tend to reorganize and redistribute the material of which it is composed. . . . The larger the shift, the more violent the quake, and the more frequent the shifts, the more frequent are the shocks.'[20]

Whether the quake is violent or not, it has served to maintain or re-establish the equilibrium of the earth. Yet the shifts may be small changes of geological formations, or they may be changes in the structural relations between land and water, for example.

At what point the shift is large enough to warrant the conclusion

that a change *of* the system has taken place, is hard to determine. Only if one deals with extreme instances are ideal types—such as feudalism, capitalism, etc.—easily applied. A system based on serfdom, for example, may undergo considerable change within—*vide* the effects of the Black Death on the social structure of medieval society; and even an abolition of serfdom may not necessarily be said to mark the end of an old and the emergence of a new system, *vide* nineteenth-century Russia.

If 'it is necessary to distinguish clearly between the processes *within* the system and processes of change *of* the system', as Professor Parsons has pointed out,[21] an attempt should be made to establish a heuristic criterion for this distinction. We propose to talk of a change *of* system when all major structural relations, its basic institutions and its prevailing value system have been drastically altered. (In cases where such a change takes place abruptly, as, for example, the Russian Revolution, there should be no difficulty. It is well to remember, however, that transformations of social systems do not always consist in an abrupt and simultaneous change of all basic institutions. Institutions may change gradually, by mutual adjustment, and it is only over a period of time that the observer will be able to claim that the social system has undergone a basic transformation in its structural relations.) In concrete historical reality, no clear-cut distinctions exist. Change *of* system may be the result (or the sum total) of previous changes *within* the system. This does not however detract from the usefulness of the theoretical distinction.

It is precisely Marx's contention that the change from feudalism to a different type of social system can be understood only through an investigation of the stresses and strains *within* the feudal system. Whether given forms of conflict will lead to changes in the social system or to breakdown and to formation of a new system will depend on the rigidity and resistance to change, or inversely on the elasticity of the control mechanisms of the system.

It is apparent, however, that the rigidity of the system and the intensity of conflict within it are not independent of each other. Rigid systems which suppress the incidence of conflict exert pressure towards the emergence or radical cleavages and violent forms of conflict. More elastic systems, which allow the open and direct expression of conflict within them and which adjust to the shifting balance of power which these conflicts both indicate and bring about, are less likely to be menaced by basic and explosive alignments within their midst.

In what follows the distinction between strains, conflicts and disturbances within a system which lead to a re-establishment of equilibrium, and conflicts which lead to the establishment of new systems and new types of equilibria, will be examined.[22] Such an examination will be

most profitably begun by considering what Thorstein Veblen[23] has called 'Vested Interests'.[24]

Any social system implies an allocation of power, as well as wealth and status positions among individual actors and component sub-groups. As has been pointed out, there is never complete concordance between what individuals and groups within a system consider their just due and the system of allocation. Conflict ensues in the effort of various frustrated groups and individuals to increase their share of gratification. Their demands will encounter the resistance of those who previously had established a 'vested interest' in a given form of distribution of honour, wealth and power.

To the vested interests, an attack against their position necessarily appears as an attack upon the social order.[25] Those who derive privileges from a given system of allocation of status, wealth and power will perceive an attack upon these prerogatives as an attack against the system itself.

However, mere 'frustration' will not lead to a questioning of the legitimacy of the position of the vested interests, and hence to conflict. Levels of aspiration as well as feelings of deprivation are relative to institutionalized expectations and are established through comparison.[26] When social systems have institutionalized goals and values to govern the conduct of component actors, but limit access to these goals for certain members of the society, 'departures from institutional requirements' are to be expected.[27] Similarly, if certain groups within a social system compare their share in power, wealth and status honour with that of other groups *and* question the legitimacy of this distribution, discontent is likely to ensue. If there exist no institutionalized provisions for the expression of such discontents, departures from what is required by the norms of the social system may occur. These may be limited to 'innovation' or they may consist in the rejection of the institutionalized goals. Such 'rebellion' 'involves a genuine transvaluation, where the direct or vicarious experience of frustration leads to full denunciation of previously prized values'.[28] Thus it will be well to distinguish between those departures from the norms of a society which consist in mere 'deviation' and those which involve the formation of distinctive patterns and new value systems.

What factors lead groups and individuals to question at a certain point the legitimacy of the system of distribution of rewards, lies largely outside the scope of the present inquiry. The intervening factors can be sought in the ideological, technological, economic or any other realm. It is obvious, moreover, that conflict may be a result just as much as a source of change. A new invention, the introduction of a new cultural trait through diffusion, the development of new methods of production or distribution, etc., will have a differential impact within a social system. Some strata will feel it to be detrimental to their material

or ideal interests, while others will feel their position strengthened through its introduction. Such disturbances in the equilibrium of the system lead to conditions in which groups or individual actors no longer do willingly what they have to do and do willingly what they are not supposed to do. Change, no matter what its source, breeds strain and conflict.

Yet, it may be well to repeat that mere 'frustration' and the ensuing strains and tensions do not necessarily lead to group conflict. Individuals under stress may relieve their tension through 'acting out' in special safety-valve institutions in as far as they are provided for in the social system; or they may 'act out' in a deviant manner, which may have serious dysfunctional consequences for the system, and bring about change in this way. This, however, does not reduce the frustration from which escape has been sought since it does not attack their source.

If, on the other hand, the strain leads to the emergence of specific new patterns of behaviour of whole groups of individuals who pursue 'the optimization of gratification'[29] by choosing what they consider appropriate means for the maximization of rewards, social change which reduces the sources of their frustration may come about. This may happen in two ways: if the social system is flexible enough to adjust to conflict situations we will deal with change *within* the system. If, on the other hand, the social system is not able to readjust itself and allows the accumulation of conflict, the 'aggressive' groups, imbued with a new system of values which threatens to split the general consensus of the society and imbued with an ideology which 'objectifies' their claims, may become powerful enough to overcome the resistance of vested interests and bring about the breakdown of the system and the emergence of a new distribution of social values.[30]

In his *Poverty of Philosophy*, Marx was led to consider the conditions under which economic classes constitute themselves:

Economic conditions have first transformed the mass of the population into workers. The domination of capital created for this mass a common situation and common interest. This mass was thus already a class as against capital, but not for itself. It is in the struggle . . . that the mass gathers together and constitutes itself as a class for itself. The interests which it defends become class interests.[31]

With this remarkable distinction between class *in itself* and class *for itself* (which unfortunately he didn't elaborate upon in later writings though it informs all of them—if not the writings of most latter-day 'marxists'), Marx illuminates a most important aspect of group formation: group belongingness is established by an objective conflict situation—in this case a conflict of interests;[32] but only by experiencing this antagonism, that is, by becoming aware of it and by acting it out, does the group (or class) establish its identity.

When changes in the equilibrium of a society lead to the formation

of new groupings or to the strengthening of existing groupings that set themselves the goal of overcoming resistance of vested interests through conflict, changes in structural relations, as distinct from simple 'mal-adjustment', can be expected.

What Robert Park said about the rise of nationalist and racial movements is more generally applicable:

> They strike me as natural and wholesome disturbances of the social routine, the effect of which is to arouse in those involved a lively sense of common purpose and to give those who feel themselves oppressed the inspiration of a common cause. . . . The effect of this struggle is to increase the solidarity and improve the morale of the 'oppressed' minority.[33]

It is this sense of common purpose arising in and through conflict that is peculiar to the behaviour of individuals who meet the challenge of new conditions by a group-forming and value-forming response. Strains which result in no such formations of new conflict groups or strengthening of old ones may contribute to bringing about change, but a type of change that fails to reduce the sources of strain since by definition tension-release behaviour does not involve purposive action. Conflict through group action, on the other hand, is likely to result in a 'deviancy' which may be the prelude of new patterns and reward systems apt to reduce the sources of frustration. If the tensions that need outlets are continually reproduced within the structure, abreaction through tension-release mechanisms may preserve the system but at the risk of ever-renewed further accumulation of tension. Such accumulation eventuates easily in the irruption of destructive unrealistic conflict. If feelings of dissatisfaction, instead of being suppressed or diverted are allowed expression against 'vested interests', and in this way to lead to the formation of new groupings within the society, the emergence of genuine transvaluations is likely to occur. Sumner saw this very well when he said: 'We want to develop symptoms, we don't want to suppress them.'[34]

Whether the emergence of such new groupings or the strengthening of old ones with the attendant increase in self-confidence and self-esteem on the part of the participants will lead to a change *of* or *within* the system will depend on the degree of cohesion that the system itself has attained. A well-integrated society will tolerate and even welcome group conflict; only a weakly integrated one must fear it. The great English liberal John Morley said it very well:

> If [the men who are most attached to the reigning order of things] had a larger faith in the stability for which they profess so great an anxiety, they would be more free alike in understanding and temper to deal generously, honestly and effectively with those whom they count imprudent innovators.[35]

NOTES

[1] George Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, ch. 2, par. 11.

[2] John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct*, N.Y., The Modern Library, 1930, p. 300.

[3] Lewis A. Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict*, Glencoe, Ill.; London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1956.

[4] Cf. McAlister Coleman, *Men and Coal*, N.Y., Farrar and Rinehart, 1943.

[5] *Union Wages and Labor's Earnings*, Syracuse, Syracuse Univ. Press, 1951.

[6] Quoted by Will Herberg, 'When Social Scientists View Labor', *Commentary*, Dec. 1951, XII, 6, pp. 590-6. See also Seymour Melman, *Dynamic Factors in Industrial Productivity*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1956, on the effects of rising wage levels on productivity.

[7] See the criticism of the Mayo approach by Daniel Bell, 'Adjusting Men to Machines', *Commentary*, Jan. 1947, pp. 79-88; C. Wright Mills, 'The Contribution of Sociology to the Study of Industrial Relations', *Proceedings of the Industrial Relations Research Association*, 1948, pp. 199-222.

[8] See, e.g., R. K. Merton, 'The Machine, The Workers and The Engineer', *Social Theory and Social Structure*, Glencoe, Ill., 1949, pp. 317-28; Georges Friedmann, *Industrial Society*, Glencoe, Ill., 1956.

[9] For informal organization and change, see Roethlisberger & Dickson, *Management and the Worker*, Cambridge, 1939, especially pp. 567-8; for formal organization, see Selig Perlman, *The Theory of the Labor Movement*; on general relations between technology and labour, see Elliot D. Smith and Richard C. Nyman, *Technology and Labor*, New Haven, Yale Univ. Press, 1939.

[10] Henri Pirenne, *Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1949, p. 186.

[11] See W. F. Ogburn, *Social Change*, N.Y.: B. W. Huebsch, 1923, for the theory of 'cultural lag' due to 'vested interests'.

[12] Cf. Max Weber, 'Bureaucracy', *From Max Weber*, Gerth and Mills, ed., pp. 196-244. For the pathology of bureaucracy, see R. K. Merton, 'Bureaucratic Structure and Personality', *Social Theory and Social Structure*, op. cit., pp. 151-60.

[13] Kenneth Burke, *Permanence and Change*, N.Y., New Republic, 1936, p. 18.

[14] John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, Chicago, Gateway Books, 1946, p. 100.

[15] This is, of course, a central thesis of Arnold Toynbee's monumental *A Study of History*, O.U.P.

[16] John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct*, op. cit., p. 178.

[17] See, e.g., Melville Dalton, 'Conflicts Between Staff and Line Managerial Officers', *Am. Soc. R.*, XV (1950), pp. 342-51. The author seems to be unaware of the positive functions of this conflict, yet his data clearly indicate the 'innovating potential' of conflict between staff and line.

[18] Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, Chicago, Charles H. Kerr & Co., 1910, p. 132.

[19] For an understanding of Marx's methodology and its relation to Hegelian philosophy, see Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution*, N.Y., O.U.P., 1941.

Note the similarity with John Dewey's thought: 'Where there is change, there is of necessity numerical plurality, multiplicity, and from variety comes opposition, strife. Change is alteration, or "othering" and this means diversity. Diversity means division, and division means two sides and their conflict.' *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, N.Y., Mentor Books, 1950, p. 97. See also the able discussion of the deficiencies of Talcott Parsons' sociological theories by David Lockwood, *B.J.S.*, June, 1956.

[20] Waldemar Kaemfert, 'Science in Review', *New York Times*, July 27, 1952.

[21] Talcott Parsons, *The Social System*, London, Tavistock Publications: 1951, p. 481.

I owe much to Prof. Parsons' treatment of this distinction despite a number of major disagreements with his theory of social change.

[22] The concept of *equilibrium* is of great value in social science provided it is used, as by Schumpeter, as a point of reference permitting measurement of departures from it. 'The concept of a state of equilibrium, although no such state may ever be realized, is useful and indeed indispensable for purposes of analyses and diagnosis, as a point of reference' (Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Business Cycle*, N.Y., McGraw Hill, 1939, p. 69). But certain

types of sociological functionalism tend to move from this methodological use of the concept to one which has some clearly ideological features. The ideal type of equilibrium, in this illegitimate use, becomes a normative instead of a methodological concept. Attention is focused on the maintenance of a system which is somehow identified with the ethically desirable (see Merton's discussion of this ideological misuse of functionalism in *Social Theory and Social Structure*, op. cit., pp. 38 ff. and 116-17; see also my review of Parsons' Essays, *American Journal of Sociology*, 55, March 1950, pp. 502-4). Such theorizing tends to look at all behaviour caused by strains and conflict as 'deviancy' from the legitimate pattern, thereby creating the perhaps unintended impression that such behaviour is somehow 'abnormal' in an ethical sense, and obscuring the fact that some 'deviant' behaviour actually serves the creation of new patterns rather than a simple rejection of the old.

[23] See especially *The Vested Interests and the State of the Industrial Arts*, N.Y., 1919.

[24] Max Lerner ('Vested Interests', *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, XV, p. 240) gives the following definition: 'When an activity has been pursued so long that the individuals concerned in it have a prescriptive claim to its exercise and its profit, they are considered to have a vested interest in it.'

[25] Veblen has described this aptly: 'The code of proprieties, conventionalities, and usages in vogue at any given time and among any given people has more or less of the character of an organic whole; so that any appreciable change in one point of the scheme involves something of a change or readjustment of other points also, if not a reorganization all along the line. . . . When an attempted reform involves the suppression or thoroughgoing remodelling of an institution of first-rate importance in the conventional scheme, it is immediately felt that a serious derangement of the entire scheme would result. . . . Any of these innovations would, we are told, "shake the social structure to its base", "reduce society to chaos", . . . etc. The aversion to change is in large part an aversion to the bother of making the readjustment which any given change will necessitate' (*The Theory of the Leisure Class*, N.Y., The Modern Library, pp. 201-3).

[26] See Robert K. Merton and Alice S. Kitt, 'Contributions to the Theory of Reference Group Behaviour' for a development of the concept of 'relative deprivation' (originally suggested by Stouffer *et al.* in *The American Soldier*) and its incorporation into the framework of a theory of reference groups.

[27] This whole process is exhaustively discussed by Merton in his paper on 'Social Structure and Anomie', *Social Theory*, op. cit.

[28] Ibid., p. 145.

[29] T. Parsons, *The Social System*, op. cit., p. 498.

[30] R. K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*, op. cit., pp. 42-3 and 116-17.

[31] Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, op. cit., pp. 188-9.

[32] This makes it necessary to distinguish between realistic and non-realistic conflict: social conflicts that arise from frustration of specific demands and from estimates of gains of the participants, and that are directed at the presumed frustrating object, may be called realistic conflicts. Non-realistic conflicts, on the other hand, are not occasioned by the rival ends of the antagonists, but by the need for tension release of one or both of them. Some groups may be formed with the mere purpose of releasing tension. Such groups 'collectivize' their tensions, so to speak. They can, by definition, only be disruptive rather than creative since they are built on negative rather than positive cathexes. But groups of this kind will remain marginal; their actions cannot bring about social change unless they accompany and strengthen realistic conflict groups. In such cases we deal with an admixture of non-realistic and realistic elements mutually reinforcing each other within the same social movements. Members who join for the mere purpose of tension release are often used for the 'dirty work' by the realistic conflict groups.

[33] Robert E. Park, 'Personality and Cultural Conflict', *Publications of the Am. Soc. Soc.*, 25, 1931, pp. 95-110. See p. 107.

[34] Wm. G. Sumner, *War and Other Essays*, p. 241.

[35] John Morley, *On Compromise*, London, Macmillan & Co., 1917, p. 263.